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# Desire, *Beyng*, event: principles of a minimal Heideggerianism

Andrew Tyler Jorn<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Heidegger's philosophy no longer provokes us today as it once did. In this essay, I outline three principles of a minimal Heideggerianism – psychoanalytically inflected and stripped of all dubious mysteriological imagery – that brings Heidegger's thought up to date and allows it to speak to the exigencies of the present. These principles are as follows. First, the historical 'destiny' of humanity has unfolded along a single trajectory culminating in modern techno-capitalism qua total world-picture that corresponds most perfectly and completely to the internally self-defeating structure of *desire*. Second, what Heidegger calls *Beyng* is the master name for the general loss or lack that drives this destiny inexorably onward; *Beyng* thus has no positive content other than its irrecoverable absence. Third, the *event* cannot be understood as the promise of an ultimately fulfilling reunification with *Beyng à venir*, but only as a traversing of the fundamental fantasy of such unification.

**Keywords:** Heidegger; Nietzsche; psychoanalysis; desire; capitalism

## Introduction

As Žižek points out apropos Hegel, a genuine historical rupture is defined by the emergence of a fundamental impossibility – namely, that of a certain naivety, of looking the other way and feigning indifference, pretending the break never happened.<sup>2</sup> Even if its seismic impact on intellectual life was not as great as that of Plato, Descartes, or Hegel (Žižek's triumvirate of philosophical titans), Heidegger's philosophy, too, was undoubtedly such a rupture, in the sense that it set an agenda that couldn't be ignored. Just as Schoenberg forced the musical world to take a stance vis-à-vis

tonality,<sup>3</sup> for much of the twentieth century philosophy struggled to reconcile itself with a certain brand of historico-transcendental ontology and, later, a tall tale about a universal world destiny culminating in modern technics – a progressive fall into mass oblivion qua collective infatuation with presence, objectivity, and instrumental rationality – and the saving power of art and poetry. Today, in the opening decades of the twenty-first century, this agenda has all but run its course. 'Heidegger' remains a trusty product line for the educational sausage factory – the focus of endless neo-scholastic busywork and the raw material for a steady stream of research 'outputs'. But

<sup>1</sup>Tsukuba Gakuin University, Japan.

<sup>2</sup>Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 193.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* Žižek refers here to the standard Adornoian interpretation of serialism, one which, while heuristically useful, is nevertheless historically questionable.

we have long since ceased to turn to existential phenomenology for the deepest insights into the human condition. We don't reach for concepts such as 'enframing' (*Gestell*) or 'standing reserve' (*Bestand*) to elucidate the meaning and dangers of a techno-scientism run amok. And we certainly (and thankfully) don't look to grand metanarratives about epochal 'sendings of being' or the 'ringing of the fourfold' to inform our efforts to deal with imminent crises such as the ongoing (and ever increasing) threat of nuclear war or a raging climate emergency which is not just on our doorsteps but indeed already flooding our basements and burning up our homes. Heidegger's disastrous political career aside, this kind of thinking has simply lost its hold on us; we no longer have to ask where we stand vis-à-vis Heidegger in order to get our intellectual bearings in the world. Indifference is not only possible; indeed it is the norm.

But if Heideggerian thought no longer provokes us as it once did, perhaps it retains a certain power to orient us, namely, by framing an intellectual *mise-en-scène* that can serve as a backdrop against which further and more fine-tuned theoretical work can comfortably be carried out. If so, however, the general message of this thought will inevitably have to be recast in language which is more resonant with the times. This language, I will propose, along with its underlying conceptual logic, is that of psychoanalysis, and more specifically, a fully contemporary and deeply penetrating psychoanalytic critique of capitalism which at first glance might seem wholly antithetical to both the spirit and the letter of Heidegger's philosophy. But this is far from the case. The justification for translating Heidegger's thought into the psychoanalytic idiom is the very principle that informs Heidegger's own readings of the history of philosophy. This principle – to which psychoanalysis also subscribes in

its own way and for its own ends – holds that the truth or 'essence' of a body of thought is only ever fully understood retroactively, in the light of a present whose contours it will already and necessarily have come to shape (thus Heidegger brings out the truth of Nietzsche's thought in the same way that Nietzsche brings out the truth of Hegel's). The claim, then, is that psychoanalytic theory is unusually, perhaps uniquely, positioned to bring out the truth of the body of thought that falls under the heading of the name 'Heidegger' – a truth that, moreover, confirms that this thought continues to speak to the needs and concerns of the present. To be sure, there is a certain irony or tension in saying that Heidegger's thought maintains its pertinence only and precisely insofar as it is translated into the language of psychoanalysis (why not simply do psychoanalysis?). The wager, however, is that the benefit of this translation is mutual: the hope is that stripping Heideggerian thought of its burdensome mysteriological baggage with the aid of psychoanalysis not only rescues the former from irrelevance but also, and conversely, gives the latter an opening for appropriating elements of Heidegger's (now demystified) historical ontology and its radical and engrained scepticism of the modern religion of infinite power and productivity.<sup>4</sup>

Drawing out the inner truth of a thought in this way is something different from a 'hermeneutical' analysis which would seek to uncover obscure authorial intentions through an elaborate and tortuous exegesis of 'texts'. The aim is not to reconstruct what Heidegger 'meant' to say, but rather to say what was in fact said in a better way. One reason for assigning this role to psychoanalysis in particular is that, as with Heidegger, it subordinates a diagnosis of the contradictions of capitalism as a contingent system of organisation of politico-economic life to higher-order reflection on

<sup>4</sup> I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting that I flag this tension up front.

prior, constitutive, and equally contradictory forces and processes formative of the subject of capitalist modernity as such. For both, the modern subject is not a mere 'effect' of capitalism but in some sense its condition of possibility. The terms 'capital' and 'capitalism' must accordingly be understood in what Bataille calls a 'general' as opposed to a 'restricted' sense.<sup>5</sup> While it is true enough that no specific configuration of capitalist relations of production is historically inevitable, there is nevertheless a sense in which we can say that 'capital' qua orientation to productive life *überhaupt* is the ontological correlate – and highest and fullest expression – of human subjectivity insofar as it is (d)riven by certain irreducible and irremediable structural tensions and traumas. So far, then, from capital being merely a 'product' of human nature, it would be more correct to say that capital *is* human nature itself: 'capital' being one of the names, even a kind of master name, for an originary restlessness – an inexorable and irrepressible 'will to difference' – engendered and perpetuated by a structural conflict – what Heidegger would call an '*Urstreit*' – at the heart of the subject's libidinal economy.

In the remainder of this essay, I will sketch out this quasi-psychoanalytic essence of Heideggerian philosophy in three basic theses, which I will organise under the following headings: power, *Beyng*, event. Each of these headings corresponds to a fundamental teaching of psychoanalytic theory, to which we might give the corresponding headings: desire, *object a*/lost object, traversing the fundamental fantasy. Taken together, these theses constitute the core of a general orientation that I will call *minimal Heideggerianism*.

## Power | desire

The figure of Nietzsche comes to occupy a singularly privileged place in Heidegger's project. For Heidegger, Nietzsche is 'the last thinker of the modern era'. This means, of course, not that Nietzsche anachronistically brings the modern era to a close, but rather that he completes or fulfils it. Nietzsche is singled out because he is the thinker who 'thinks the modern essence of the West simultaneously with the historical essence of the modern world history of the globe'.<sup>6</sup>

A more universalising thesis could hardly be imagined. Heidegger is effectively dethroning Hegel as the thinker of the absolute and bestowing that status on Nietzsche; he is unambiguously proposing that European modernity – as expressed in its highest and most perfect form in Nietzsche's philosophy – in some fundamental sense marks the end or telos (qua realisation of the 'essence') of the history of all humanity hitherto. 'Nietzsche's thinking', Heidegger declares, is 'the genuine European-planetary thinking', i.e., the 'European-planetary trait in Nietzsche's metaphysics' is itself 'only the consequence of that fundamental trait in his philosophy through which his philosophy reaches back' to the beginning, 'into the concealed destiny of Western thinking, and in a certain way completes its determination'.<sup>7</sup>

What sort of 'essence' might this be? What 'completes' itself in Nietzsche's philosophy? Heidegger's answer is strangely simple: what Nietzsche brings to light is the (then-still-hidden) truth of being itself. If we put this in ordinary language, this says that there is something about the way in which human beings understand – 'naturally', as it were, and so perhaps inevitably – what it means for beings 'to be' at all that propels, slowly but inexorably, all of human history, the 'world history of the

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, Vol. 1, 19–26.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, *Thinking and Poetizing*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–8.

globe', along a certain fixed teleological trajectory. More specifically, it is because we have never *not* understood being as *objectivity* – the structural correlate of productive activity in general – that global-universal history has unfolded in the direction of a progressive mastery and domination of the earth. What Heidegger finds in Nietzsche, then, is a perceptive, honest, and fearless appraisal, indeed a ringing endorsement, of 'being' as we have always already (if only obscurely) understood it to be: raw *will to power*. 'If Nietzsche thinks what *is*, and thereby attempts to say what beings as a whole actually are with respect to their being, then Nietzsche says: all beings are, insofar as they are, will to power.'<sup>8</sup> The name 'Nietzsche' is the banner heading of an epoch – 'the epoch of the development and installation of the mastery of the human over the earth. The human as the subject of production. The earth as the core area of the objectivity of world use.'<sup>9</sup>

For many reasons, we no longer have much use for such a metaphysically suggestive yarn about a world-historical destiny perfecting and completing itself in European modernity. But perhaps this story can be told in a more nuanced and plausible way – one that brings out *its* 'inner truth' in a manner comparable to Heidegger's distillation of the truth of Nietzsche's thought. Psychoanalytic drive theory, I will risk, can help us do just that.

Here we must be content with a rough sketch of the argument. We begin by distinguishing between instinct (*Instinkt*) and drive (*Trieb*) as closely related but nonetheless distinct phenomena. While instincts are oriented toward the satisfaction of biological needs – and for this reason are characteristic of living organisms in general, qua living – drives, on the other hand, are never oriented toward mere satisfaction but are rather and always invested

in 'objects' to which such satisfaction is intimately but ultimately only contingently tied. In the paradigmatic example: at the level of bare animal instinct, the human infant is satisfied by nourishing milk, while at the level of the drives, it 'cathects' – i.e., libidinally attaches itself to – the mother's breast as an object which is associatively coupled with the enjoyment of nourishment despite providing no physical nourishment itself. Drives, then, have a somatic source, but they ultimately transcend the strictly biological domain.

The ground of what Heidegger calls 'the historical essence of the modern world history of the globe' lies in the curious dynamics of this transcendence. Unlike instincts, which regulate the organism's life and keep it in a state of relative homeostasis, drives turn out to have a complex structure that, if thought through, explains why the human is a 'subject of production' for whom the earth is nothing but 'the core area of the objectivity of world use'.<sup>10</sup> When an organism gets what it needs, it gets 'the Thing itself', as it were – it touches 'the Real'. An object, on the other hand, can never be a Thing in this sense. Objects are internally split – or 'barred', as Lacan would say – and for two main reasons. First, on the phenomenological or 'Imaginary' register, objects always appear as an ever-shifting rhapsody of what Husserl calls 'adumbrations' or partial views, i.e., montage-like assemblages subject to ceaseless eidetic variation. Objects, put simply, are shot through with negativity – or more precisely, negativity is structurally constitutive of 'objectivity' as such: *all* objects are 'partial objects'.<sup>11</sup> Second, on the socio-cultural or 'Symbolic' register, the meaning of objects is always shifting and unstable, a retroactive and contingent by-product of a complex, anonymous, and autonomous play of (linguistic and

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>10</sup> The following description of the drives as internally thwarted is a rough summary of Adrian Johnston's theory of the 'split drive' in his early work *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive*.



non-linguistic) signifiers (what Derrida calls *différance*). Unlike in the case of instincts, then, drives never get what they are after; objects never satisfy in the way food qua nourishment *simpliciter* satisfies a hungry animal. And it is precisely this impossibility of attaining full satisfaction that precipitates an inexorable metonymic ‘sliding’ from one necessarily inadequate object-choice to the next, the consumption of each only exacerbating, never satiating, the original demand. Ever in hot pursuit of the object that would be ‘It’, the Thing itself, the drives are, as Freud says, pure compulsions to repeat.

There is, in short, an irreducible, structural antinomy involved in the sublation of instinct. Drives are propelled and sustained by the very failure that elicits them; they obtain a kind of enjoyment – or ‘*jouissance*’ in Lacanian jargon – precisely from their structural inability ever to obtain the enjoyment they expect. In psychoanalytic theory, this strictly negative aspect of the drive – i.e., drive taken specifically from the angle of its appearance as an originary frustration or dissatisfaction stemming from the constitutive impossibility of acquiring the Thing itself – is *desire*. Strictly speaking, drive and desire are not distinct libidinal forces. Indeed we cannot even say, as Freud himself did, that they fall on different psychic registers (as the transformation of unconscious pleasure into conscious unpleasure). Rather the drive-desire couplet points to a fundamental tension or fissure at the heart of subjectivity itself.<sup>12</sup> The unhappy ‘*ce n’est pas ça*’ of desire is co-emergent with and inseparable from the drive’s blind, superegoic injunction to *enjoy!*, *enjoy!* to

no end. As opposed to the organism seeking instinctual gratification, the subject *stricto sensu*, as a subject oriented toward objects, is defined precisely by this self-defeating ‘bad infinity’ of satisfaction and frustration. What traumatises us is not simply not getting what we want, but the terrible, tragic way in which we only get what we want in never getting what we want. This explains the complex and paradoxical role of fantasy, whose job is to fabricate obstacles (such as Lacan’s *nom/non du père*, i.e., the ‘No!’ of an authority) that make the dream of full *jouissance* – of ‘enjoying our enjoyment’ – possible precisely by keeping it forever out of reach.<sup>13</sup>

From this perspective, it becomes somewhat less preposterous to talk about a universal (if uneven) history of progressive domination on the part of ‘subjects of production’ for whom the earth is a vast field of ‘objectivity for world use’. For we only have to ask how we should expect such constitutively frustrated subjects to organise their world generally speaking. And the obvious answer is that desiring subjects are likely to configure the world along the lines of this fundamental fantasy. If we think of capitalism (or ‘techno-capitalism’,<sup>14</sup> as Heidegger would have it) along Bataillean lines, as a system of production geared toward the expansion of the productivity-expanding forces themselves *in perpetuum* (of production for its own sake), then capitalism turns out to be, at bottom, simply the most sublime and ‘authentic’ (in the sense of ‘ap-proprie’, discussed below) external manifestation of desire. Capitalism accomplishes this in two related ways. First, it sets in motion an immensely power-

<sup>11</sup> One of the best recent accounts of this constitutive negativity of the object is found in the life-phenomenology of Renaud Barbaras. As he writes, ‘it is not a question of a dimension that would be added to being or that would carve out its constitutive density, but of a negativity that is *constitutive of being itself*... which is tantamount to saying that the presence of the appearing involves essentially a dimension of indeterminacy or retreat.’ Barbaras, *Desire and Distance*, 73.

<sup>12</sup> Johnston, op. cit., 373–4.

<sup>13</sup> As Todd McGowan writes, ‘The task of fantasy is envisioning the possibility of a complete satisfaction that the subject can never experience.’ See his *Capitalism and Desire*, 203.

<sup>14</sup> I first encountered this formulation in Miguel de Beistegui, *Thinking with Heidegger*, 155.

ful apparatus of differential production which transforms the world – beings as such and as a whole – into a vast field of objects whose sole *raison d'être* is to mask the inherent failure of the drives by creating the illusion of the possibility of an infinite (and infinitely accelerating) proliferation of difference as such: 'This may not be "It"...', but perhaps this, or this, or this...' At the same time, and second, capitalism looms over the subject as a Big Other whose very complexity, incomprehensibility, and internal contradictions function as a scapegoat to explain and justify this failure despite this productivity: 'I *might* have "It", if only the system weren't so broken, if only there were more regulations...', etc. It is precisely this paradoxical unity of *yes!* and *no!* that makes capitalism so seductive and enduring, and that demands that we understand it as something essentially more than a mere logic of social organisation. By conjuring up the illusion of the infinite production of difference, capitalism sustains the fantasy of full satisfaction even while, at the very same time, it alleviates the desiring subject's guilt and anxiety by absolving it of any responsibility for its constant failure to live up to this (impossible) demand.<sup>15</sup>

## Beyng | *objet a*/lost object

Having established this much, the two remaining principles of minimal Heideggerianism fall more easily into place. Heidegger, as everyone knows, is the thinker of 'being'. In truth, however, it would be far more correct to say that Heidegger is the thinker of *everything but* 'being'. The reason is that, from the beginning to the end of his career, 'being' is precisely what *never shows up*. The project of *Being and Time*, of course, was famously cut short by Heidegger's failure to go beyond the transcendental

project of isolating the way in which being is necessarily understood within the temporal horizon of human existence. Likewise, in his later work Heidegger is at pains to explain that his continued use of the word 'being' is intended to dislodge it from the 'metaphysical' framework which has fixed its meaning since the dawn of Western thought (thus precipitating its inevitable decline into mere 'objectivity of world use' always 'on hand' for the 'subject of production'). This is evident from Heidegger's refusal to settle into a stable vocabulary vis-à-vis 'being'. Sometimes, for example, Heidegger adopts the medieval spelling 'beyng' (*Seyn*), in the manner of Hölderlin. At other times he invokes a 'mystery' (*Geheimnis*) or an 'enigma' (*Rätsel*). Still at other times he prefers to put the word 'being' under erasure by simply crossing it out – the cross itself gesturing vaguely to something else, a sort of 'fourfold' play of equiprimordial cosmic ingredients (*Geviert*).

Beyng, that is to say, only first appears *as lost*, missing, in retreat; it has no positive content outside of this originary absence and withdrawal. Beyng signifies a 'Real' which is only given after the fact, in and through its very oblivion. 'You may hunt down all beings', Heidegger says, 'but nowhere will the trace of being show itself'.<sup>16</sup> In psychoanalytic terms, Beyng is therefore yet another name – perhaps the most general name – for the 'lost object' of the drives, the Thing itself which appears precisely as the forever unattainable. Beyng is what Lacan calls '*objet a*', the intangible trace of the Real that is always one step ahead of desire. In chasing down Beyng in every object, desiring subjectivity inevitably turns Beyng 'itself' into an object; the mad pursuit of this elusive *objet a* is itself what condemns the world

<sup>15</sup> As Samo Tomšič writes, the drive 'is fixated on *the* object, the general equivalent, which due to its paradoxical status... supports the infinitisation of satisfaction, which is to say, its impossibility and endless perpetuation. The capitalist drive for self-valorisation is an unsatisfiable demand, which no labour can live up to.' See *The Capitalist Unconscious*, 123–4.

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger, *The Event*, 66.

to appear as an ever-growing stockpile of (empirical) objects to be mastered, consumed, and discarded. This is why Heidegger says that the most important matter for thinking today is ‘the *subjectivity* of the human and its role in (*beyng*) as objectivity’.<sup>17</sup>

## Event | traversing the fundamental fantasy

‘*Er-eignis*’ is the Heideggerian term which is usually translated as ‘event’. The German word ‘*eigen*’ has many meanings, but in Heidegger’s philosophy it often conveys a sense of ‘ownness’, as in the word ‘*Eigentlichkeit*’, traditionally translated as ‘authenticity’ but perhaps better rendered as an ‘owning up to’ oneself. Similarly, such an owning up to oneself might also be taken as a certain kind of ‘propriety’ toward oneself, to be properly (toward) oneself, i.e., to be what one is in the most ‘ap-proprieate’ way. For this reason, ‘*Er-eignis*’ is often translated as the ‘appropriative event’. And while it is customary to distinguish between authenticity and the (appropriative) event, it is also clear that they share a common concern, namely, that of what constitutes the most proper relationship between human beings and *Beyng* ‘itself’. If we insist on understanding *Beyng*, in conformity with the tradition, as an object, then such an event can only appear as something quasi-theological, a soteriological intervention *à venir* that reconciles a fallen humanity with a transcendent power. *Beyng*, however, as we said, is originally and irrecoverably lost – a Real retroactively conjured up by desiring subjectivity in the very act of pursuing it. If we keep this in mind, it follows that the event must be understood in a completely different way – not as any (re)discovery of the heretofore missing Thing, but instead, and simply, as a coming to terms with the fact that the Thing – ‘*Beyng*’ –

was never there to begin with. It must, in short, amount to what psychoanalysis calls ‘traversing the fundamental fantasy’ of full enjoyment. We will never ‘have’ *Beyng* – human beings and *Beyng* will never mutually have or ‘appropriate’ each other – as long as this is taken to mean a fantasy in which humanity finally finds itself face to face with the Thing itself in the glory of full presence. What is appropriated in the appropriative event – i.e., that which must be ‘owned up to’ as what belongs to our ‘ownmost’ humanity – is precisely this originary and irrecoverable loss. When Heidegger says that ‘only a god can save us’,<sup>18</sup> this means not that we hold out hope for divine salvation, but rather and simply that such salvation is what we can never expect or attain – there is no way ‘back’ to the Real, because the Real was lost from the beginning.

This brings us back to Nietzsche and ‘the modern world history of the globe’. For Nietzsche too, in an essential way, has traversed the fundamental fantasy. Is Nietzsche also, then, a thinker of the event? For Heidegger, Nietzsche completes – in the sense of brings to perfect closure – the history of all humanity hitherto – what Heidegger often calls the ‘first beginning’. Nietzsche accomplishes this through a simple but decisive reversal that follows the logic of desire through to its ultimate conclusion. Insofar as desire is inseparable from experiences of frustration and anxiety elicited by the trauma of the constitutive loss of the Thing (i.e., *Beyng*), its movement, however relentless, remains essentially reactive. As such, desire is *unhealthy* – a kind of sickness to be overcome in favour of an *affirmation* that treats this very loss as the *a priori* condition and catalyst of an immense and hyperactive power of world-creation. Nietzsche sublates the pathetic, rest-seeking *no!* of desire – ‘*that’s not “It”!*’ – into the *yes!* of the will to power and its relentless, uncompro-

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, *Thinking and Poetizing*, 67.

<sup>18</sup> Heidegger makes this remark in a now-infamous *Der Spiegel* interview from 1966.



missing command to master and dominate the globe – *create! create!*; that is, he affirms the *no!* itself *qua creative*. Like Nietzsche's own physical disabilities (his blindness, chronic pain, etc.), desire is the wellspring of our innermost and inexhaustible *strength* and *health*. The modern subject, the 'subject of production' – heralded by Zarathustra and epitomised in the figure of the dandy, the artist of existence – is not the one whose enjoyment is perpetually thwarted by a lack it cannot master, but rather the one who derives enjoyment precisely from the endless creativity and productivity which this constitutive lack makes possible and elicits – the one who actively 'wills to will', i.e., wills the ceaseless production of difference and nothing besides. This is what Heidegger is getting at when he says that the "essence" of the human resides in 'the completed subjectivity of the self-producing will to unstable constancy'.<sup>19</sup> Precisely in *willing* this 'unstable constancy' in setting itself up as the world-creating master-artist of existence, the subject is elevated into its 'essence' as the subject of capital *par excellence*. If capitalism is a system predicated on the logic of accumulation, this must always be understood in a qualitative and not a mere quantitative sense – not a greedy lust for *more...*, but a relentless pursuit of *the new*, other. The promise of capital is that of never having to stay the same.

But if Nietzsche completes the first beginning, it is nevertheless the case that he does not, in Heidegger's view, comprehend this completion *as such* – and for Heidegger, this absence of an historical (or onto-historical) perspective makes all the difference. It is what allows Heidegger to describe the first beginning in terms of an originary and inexorable 'forget-

ting' which flips the Hegelian dialectic on its head. It is true that history culminates in absolute freedom, but insofar as freedom is pure will to will, it is a freedom which is grounded not in knowledge but in 'the forgetfulness of beyng'.<sup>20</sup> By simply affirming Beyng as power, Nietzsche brings the epoch of this forgetfulness to its end.

## Conclusion

Are we then condemned, as it were, to the will to power? Is there not perhaps another way forward? Is another beginning possible? For Heidegger, the fact that we can ask such questions at all is evidence that we have, in some sense, begun to detach ourselves from the first beginning, from 'metaphysics'. We have entered, as Heidegger puts it, a period of *transition*. The transition is not something that comes 'after' metaphysics, but is rather a 'turning' within metaphysics itself. As thinkers of the transition, we remain firmly within metaphysics but in such a way that we are alienated from metaphysics – or as Lacan would say, 'ex-*imate*' to metaphysics, that is, excluded from within metaphysics.<sup>21</sup> In truth, it is only from the vantage point of this intimate exclusion that metaphysics is constituted as history at all. But this is also to say that metaphysics is only first constituted *as a question for thought* – namely, as the question of metaphysics itself. *Thinking* metaphysics is the furthest thing from all zealous 'criticism' of metaphysics. The question is not: how do we usurp the will to power and reverse the mania for infinite differential production it unleashes on the world (through its externalisation as capital)? It is rather and simply this: what might it mean for humanity

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger, *Thinking and Poetizing*, 65.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Heidegger, *The Event*, 70. Heidegger here talks about the transition as a time when 'the will to willing compels its executors to act against themselves'. The transition is a period in which we begin to cease to see Beyng merely as the objectivity of objects, or more simply, when we begin to reconcile ourselves with the event *qua* constitutive loss.

to engage with Beyng – the originally and irretrievably lost Real – in a new and – given the state of the planet at present, we can only add – *saner* way? How might we live in the world if not as masters – producers, creators, ‘artists’ – of the world? What might the earth be if it were no longer merely the ‘core area of the objectivity of world use’?

Heidegger is no more able to answer these questions than Marx was able to write recipes for communist cookshops of the future, or psychoanalysis is able to tell you how to enjoy your life. At the same time, Heidegger also knew that in an age in which we are ceaselessly bombarded by the most exotic and incomprehensible answers (artificial intelligence, carbon capture, augmented reality, space mining, metaverses, blockchain, quantum computing, neural interfacing, green growth...), such a commitment to genuine thinking is perhaps the most radical act of all.

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